FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

SECURITY: UNCLASSIFIED PRIORITY: AIR POUCH

EUR INDEX

TO: Department of State

755.11/3-2150

FROM: BRUSSELS 376, 3/21/50 1 enclosure

XR 755.00

REF: Royal Question

SUBJECT: LEOPOLD III's DECLARATION OF MARCH 16, 1950

Leopold III issued a declaration on March 16, 1950 saying that he believed the popular consultation showed that the Belgian people wished him to take up again the exercise of his prerogatives but that it was up to Parliament to make the final decision. A translation of this declaration is enclosed.

This declaration is addressed to the presidents of the Chamber and the Senate.

Chalmers B. Wood
Third Secretary of Embassy

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1950 MAR 27 PM 1 52
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REVIEWED BY J.L. Smith DATE NOV 1 9 1982

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Enclosure:
Translation of French text of Leopold III's declaration of March 16, 1950.

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Unquestionably the fact that the royal question has become an element of party programs has raised certain difficulties. But these difficulties, which are of an exclusively political nature, are not my responsibility. I may only assume personally the obligations attached to my dynastic role.

It is up to Parliament to take the political responsibilities. As the organ of the national sovereignity it should--by virtue of the powers conferred on it by the law of July 19, 1945--find a solution to the present crisis without further delay.

Whatever may be the decision which Parliament takes, and for which it will assume, in conformance with the Constitution, entire and exclusive responsibility, I will acquiesce. If the Assembly decides that it is not possible to give me my prerogatives, I will withdraw in order to spare the country the grave political disorders which an opposition could manifest between the level of public opinion and that of its only legitimate representative.

If, on the contrary, Parliament, enlightened by the consultation, gives me my prerogatives, the principle of the Parliamentary majority on which the regime is founded, will require that all conform and that the two Houses take up again their work within the carefully respected framework of constitutional rules.

It will then be proper that the Belgians forget--as I will do myself--the insults which they may have received in the course of the occasionally passionate debates, and reconcile themselves in order to unite their efforts for the higher interests of the country.

It should not be forgotten that at this moment foreign countries are watching Belgium closely. It will not be understood how a country which occupies her place among the democratic nations cannot put an end without delay and in a legal manner to the crisis which for too long a time has menaced the institutions on which are founded our independence and our liberty. Our domestic tranquility as well as the prestige which we should enjoy abroad are in the hands of Parliament.

End Translation

UNCLASSIFIED Enclosure to Brussels Desp. #376

Translation

LEOPOLD III's DECLARATION OF MARCH 16, 1950

Messrs. Presidents,

I address myself to you as the result of the national sovereignity which Parliament embodies in our regime.

By the law of February 1950, Parliament, considering that there was a major necessity to put an end to the Constitutional crisis which vitiates the political life of the country decided--in order to throw light on the situation for me and for itself--to call on the citizens to express their opinion on the question of whether or not I should take up again my Constitutional prerogatives.

I wish first of all to ask you, Messrs. Presidents, to transmit to the Nation my thanks for the mark of confidence which it has given me in expressing by 57.68% of the votes the wish to see Parliament put an end to the impossibility of reigning, which since my liberation has held me away from my country and from the exercise of my duties.

This approval which the citizens have given me is the more valuable to me because the favorable votes were given by Belgians belonging to every political party and to every class.

I appreciate also the fact that the consultation was made within the framework of our monarchical institutions to which the country has thus renewed its secular attachment.

The results of the consultation--which took place in an atmosphere of calmness and seriousness which proves the political maturity of the Belgians--have led me to observe that without being carried away by the movements of political passsion, the Belgian people have shown, by an incontestable majority, their desire to see me take up again the exercise of my prerogatives despite the long absence which has separated me from them.

The constitutional role of the King is to assure, at the head of the State, the stability and the continuity of power, protected by the immutable rules of monarchical succession which are proclaimed in our basic charter, from the momentary fluctuations of politics.

The oath which I have taken requires me to respect the obligations which I have assumed vis-à-vis the Belgian people. I have never ceased to affirm that I could only renounce it if the national will desired me to do so.

The national will has clearly expressed itself. Under these circumstances I can only remain at the disposition of the Nation.

FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

SECURITY: RESTRICTED PRIORITY: AIR POUCH

TO: Department of State

FROM: BRUSSELS 385, 3/23/50 1 enclosure

REF: Embtel No. 397 of March 14, 1950

SUBJECT: LIBERAL VOTERS IN POPULAR CONSULTATION: MAP OF CONSULTATION RESULTS

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RECD Mar.27
755.11/3-2350
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The importance of the Liberals in the present situation has been indicated. It will be remembered that before the consultation they finally went on record as opposed to the King's return unless he obtained majorities in Brussels and the Walloon and Flemish areas. Although he failed to obtain majorities in Brussels and the Walloon area, the post-consultation position of the Liberals has been very difficult and their decision to resign has taken some courage.

One obvious reason for this difficulty is their desire to remain in power. Another reason is that many who voted for the Liberal Party in June 1949 apparently voted for the King in March 1950.

The following tables indicate that probably most of the Flemish and about half of the Walloon Liberals may have voted "Yes" in the popular consultation. The tables show, by provinces, the percent of valid votes which the P.S.C. and Liberals combined obtained in June 1949 as compared with the Socialist and Communist combined percent for the same election. These are compared, in turn, with the percentages of favorable and unfavorable votes which Leopold received on March 12.

ANTWERP (Flemish)

	P.S.C.-Lib.	Soc.-Com.
June 1949	67.17% Yes	32.83% No
March 1950	68.12%	31.88%

WEST FLANDERS (Flemish)

June 1949	74.19% Yes	25.81% No
March 1950	74.86%	25.41%

EAST FLANDERS (Flemish)

June 1949	71.77% Yes	28.23% No
March 1950	71.88%	28.12%

LIMBOURG (Flemish)

June 1949	85.11% Yes	14.89% No
March 1950	83.52%	16.48%

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The similarity between the total P.S.C.-Liberal vote in 1949 and the "Yes" vote is striking. Since the positions of the other three parties on the Royal Question was very clear, most of their voters probably voted on the Royal Question along party lines.

NAMUR (Walloon)

	P.S.C.-Lib.	Soc.-Com.
June 1949	58.38% Yes	41.62% No
March 1950	52.94%	47.06%
Change	-5.44%	+5.44%

The Liberals were given 12.42% of the votes in 1949. This vote appears to have split quite evenly in 1950.

LIEGE (Walloon)

	P.S.C.-Lib.	Soc.-Com.
June 1949	49.95% Yes	50.25% No
March 1950	41.47%	58.53%
Change	-8.48%	+8.28%

In Liége the Liberal vote in 1949 was 15.05%. Same remark applies.

HAINAUT (Walloon)

	P.S.C.-Lib.	Soc.-Com.
June 1949	42.29% Yes	57.71% No
March 1950	35.90%	64.10%
Change	-6.39%	+6.39%

The 1949 Liberal percentage was 14.0%: Thus, in the three Walloon provinces it probably is safe to infer that the Liberal vote split almost evenly.

BRABANT (This province contains Brussels and is Flemish and Walloon)

	P.S.C.-Lib.	Soc.-Com.
June 1949	63.33% Yes	36.67% No
March 1950	50.15%	49.85%
Change	-13.18%	+13.18%

Arrondissement of BRUSSELS

	P.S.C.-Lib.	Soc.-Com.
June 1949	63.42%	36.58%
	Yes	No
March 1950	48.17%	51.83%
Change	-15.25%	+15.25%

Liberal vote 1949: 35.50%

LUXEMBOURG (Walloon)

	P.S.C.-Lib.	Soc.-Com.
June 1949	75.60%	24.40%
	Yes	No
March 1950	65.31%	34.69%
	-10.29%	+10.19%

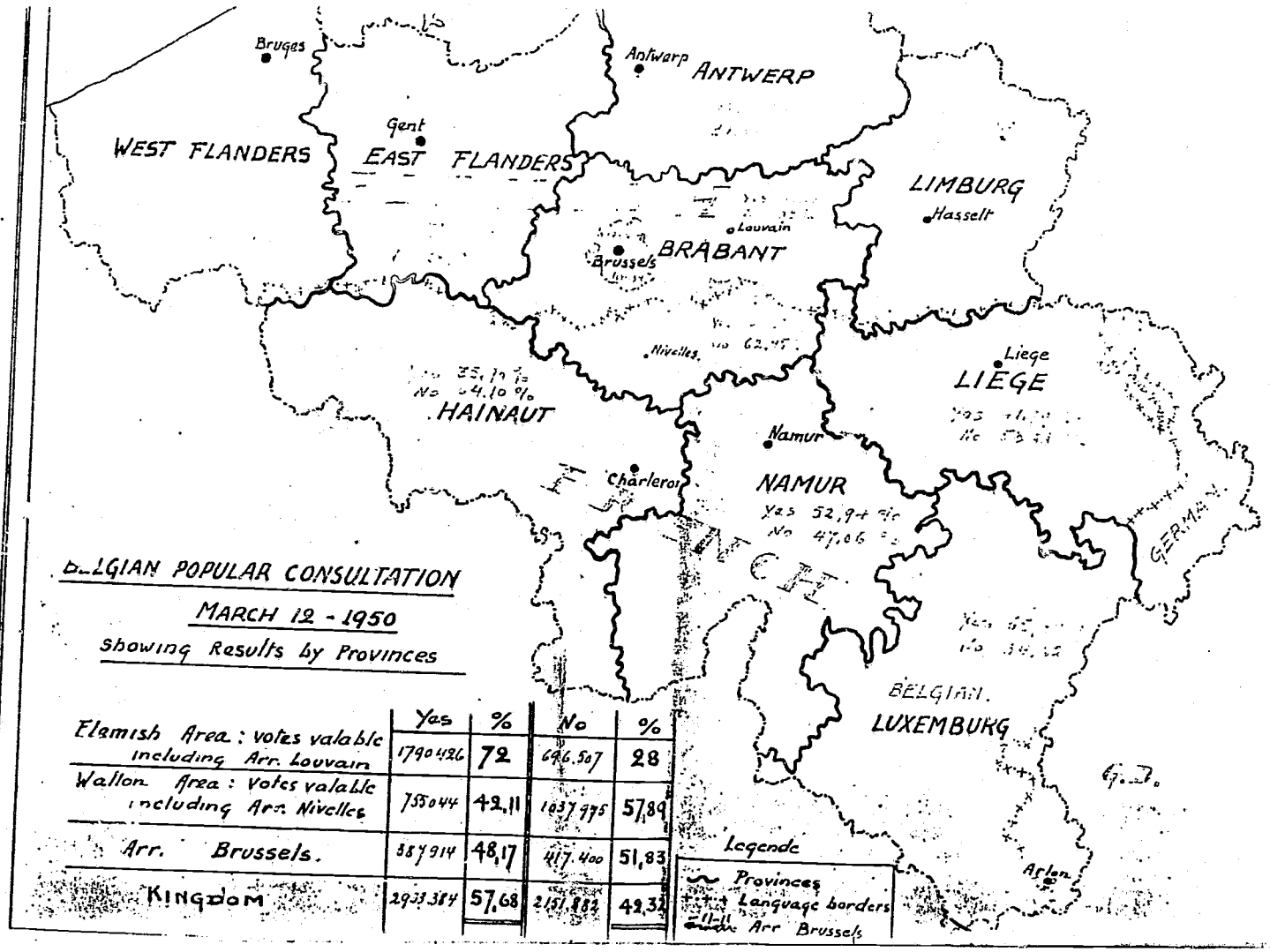
Here the Liberals seem to have voted "No" to a man. The Liberal percent of 1949 was 10.04.

These percentages have been checked against the official returns as published by the Chambre des Representants, 13 mars 1950.

There are enclosed nine copies of a map which shows in percent the results of the election by provinces and the language line of the country. It will be noted that the King obtained his highest percentages in Limbourg and West Flanders which are predominantly Flemish rural. Similarly he made his best Walloon showing in agricultural Luxembourg which is a thinly populated province. Hainaut and Liège, where the opposition was greatest, are the centers of Belgian heavy industry.

Robert McClintock
Robert McClintock
First Secretary of Embassy

Enclosure:
Nine copies of map showing results of election by provinces.



BELGIAN POPULAR CONSULTATION

MARCH 12 - 1950

Showing Results by Provinces

	Yes	%	No	%
Flemish Area : votes valable including Arr. Louvain	1790426	72	696.507	28
Wallon Area : votes valable including Arr. Nivelles	755044	42,11	1037975	57,89
Arr. Brussels.	387914	48,17	417.400	51,83
KINGDOM	2933384	57,68	2151.882	42,32